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Dangerous liaisons of terrorism and religion in the perspective of visual culture

One does not really need much cognitive effort to diagnose the currently existing conviction: in order to exist, one has to be perceived. One could say – this is nothing new, it is just a formula of George Berkeley's subjective realism *Esse est percipi*[1] (1710), transferred to the times of electronic multimedia. In the field of studies on television this stance was recontextualized by George Gerbner: "What is not shown on TV does not exist"[2]. Nowadays, Internet users even claim that what cannot be found on the Internet did not happen or is not worth attention...

Hence, among other things, the need has arisen to give some thought to the dangerous liaisons of terrorism and religion mentioned in the title of this work[3], and especially to the way in which this liaison is portrayed. An old Chinese proverb says that a picture is worth a thousand words – it is easy to realize the role of images in shaping public opinions and beliefs, as well as in perpetuating stereotypes. The visually-centred character

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[1] G. Berkeley, *Traktat o zasadach poznania ludzkiego*, Warszawa 2005; available on-line http://www.pistis.pl/biblioteka/Berkeley%20-%20Traktat%20o%20zasadach.pdf

[2] G. Gerbner et al., *The Demonstration of Power*, "Journal of Communication", 1984, no. 27,p. 283; after T. Goban-Klas, *Media i terroryści*, Kraków 2009, p. 114.

[3] The term terrorism, despite about 200 definitions, is still blurred and supposedly it will remain blurred for some time. In today's communicative space it is normal to use the epithet terrorist in a repeatedly evaluative and emotional way for propaganda and political purposes, depending on the perspective, i.e. on which side of the barrel one is currently standing. The relativistic interpretation was once proposed by Jaser Arafat: One man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist [from his talk at the forum of the United Nations General Assembly in 1974]. A lot of the media were not really concerned with political correctness after 11 IX 2001, perhaps except for the BBC (see: P. Rees, *Kolacja z terrorystą*, Kraków 2008). In this text I have attempted to use the term terrorism without any evaluative tinge, i.e. only as an illegal tactic of action based on violence (or its threat) which is supposed to lead to achieving political or ideological goals. At the same time I am convinced that a contemporary terrorist is actually an empty sign, a commonly useful rhetorical figure that is perfect, flexible and easy in all ideological instrumentalisations.

of today's culture was discussed by Milan Kundera, who in *Immortality* talked about a transition from ideology to imagology[4].

The topic is extremely broad, and that is why I would like to narrow it down to a selection of symptoms in two areas of visual culture: in the media (including materials produced by terrorists) and in art. Subsequently, I will narrow down my discussion to the terrorism of Islamic fundamentalists, for it is in this area that streams of images provoke a multitude of negative emotions and stereotypes[5].

Religious terrorism?

Throughout the whole of history the need for radical demonstrations of religious beliefs has not limited itself only to zealous prayers and effusive ritual gestures, for it was equally often based on violence. The researchers studying terrorism often cite the example of Jewish Zealots, who in the years 66-73 actively fought against the Roman occupation of the land of today's Israel. The repertoire of their tactics also comprised operations practiced nowadays – out of concern for publicity, the members of this movement would publicly stab Roman legionnaires collaborating with Jews. Episodes of bioterror included the poisoning of wells, granaries and water supply systems in Jerusalem. In his book *Inside terrorism*[6] Bruce Hoffman also refers to the religious cult of thugs, who from the 7th to the 19th century murdered in the name of a Hindu goddess Kali, or a radical Shia sect of assassins fighting against crusaders from 1090 to 1272. Despite the considerable history of phenomena indicating the relations between religion and violence that we can refer to, it is, nevertheless, hard to define unambiguously the phenomenon of religious terrorism. Even the examples presented above show that the religious factor has constituted a direct and exclusive motivation for terrorist action, whose assumption was to reach transcendent goals, salvation, or the mission of spreading their faith etc. More frequently religion was a substitute legitimization (or even "a screen – discourse" – using Michel Foucault's terminology) for action of a strictly political, emancipating or economic nature. Hoffman proposes to talk about religious terrorism only when "the originators treat violence as a divine duty or sacramental act", when clearly theological imperatives are applied, and their ways of legitimization are definitely

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[4] Cf. M. Kundera, *Nieśmiertelność*, Warszawa 1995; cf. also: G. Dziamski, *Od ideologii do imagologii*, in: *Kultura i sztuka u progu XXI wieku*, S. Krzemień-Ojak (ed.), Białystok 1997 and M. C. Taylor, E. Saarinen, *Imagologies. Media Philosophy*, London 1994.

[5] Moreover, after 11 September 2001 the first image that the words "religion and terror" triggered was of a bearded man wearing a keffiyeh, wrapped with a belt of a suicidal assassin [to recall the affair with the caricature of the Prophet Mehmet published in the Danish journal *Jyllands-Posten* – cf. J. Zydorowicz (2009) in "Przegląd Religioznawczy", 2009, vol. 1 (231)]. Moreover, recent incidents around the Arab spring made me make such a choice.

[6] B. Hoffman, *Oblicza Terroryzmu*, Warszawa 2001, p. 84.

different from those characteristic of "secular" terrorism[7]. In his study *Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions*[8] David Rapaport emphasizes that "secularization" of terrorism dates back to the 19th century, that is, to the emergence of new conceptions of the citizen and the state, new political radicalisms such as Marxism or anarchism. The subsequent wave of this secularizing tendency came back after the Second World War together with anticolonial and national liberation movements and the then existing postcountercultural movements, e.g. the Rote Armee Fraktion.

According to Hoffman, at first the emergence of new religious terrorism was connected with the Islamic revolution in Iran (1979) only to grow in power gradually in the next decades – of course not only in Muslim communities[9]. In 1982, in Lebanon, Shia Hezbollach was created, and in 1987 the Palestinian Sunni Hamas. In 1995 after the assassination of Prime Minister Icchak Rabin, the Jewish extremist perpetrator of this deed Yigal Amir confesse: "I have no regrets. I worked alone and on the orders of God"[10]. In the same year in the Tokyo underground a sect, Aum, sprays poisonous sarin, and in the USA Christian patriots blow up a federal building in Oklahoma City. Even such a narrow spectrum of examples proves that the religious factor can sometimes be the dominating one, but on other occasions it is only an instrumentarium: an effective motivator, catalyst or legitimization for political, national liberation and emancipation strategies. Significant changes in the discourse were to appear only after 11th September 2001, when Al-Qaeda together with a whole new rhetoric joins in and initiates events worldwide.

The media

Shortly after the collapse of the Twin Towers of the *World Trade Center* and damage to the Pentagon, George W. Bush announced the new order of things. From the centre of the neoliberal and secular West a new political doctrine of a strictly metaphysical character was announced, that is, the need for a fight of good with evil. Moreover, the words about the necessity of a new crusade gave it a religious character. Since the topic of crusades is rather sensitive for the whole world of Islam (not only for extremists), political correctness made Bush drop this rhetorical element in his subsequent speeches. Anyway, a characteristic feature of not only propaganda media is certain western-like simplifications, thus in the news image of the world two major binary categories prevailed; they were based on dichotomies such as us – them, civilization – barbarism, nobleness – meanness, democracy – theocracy, tolerance – fundamentalism[11].

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[7] Ibidem, p. 84.

[8] D. Rapaport, *Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions*, available on-line: www.international. ucla.edu/burkle/ article.asp?parentid=47197 [access: 18 IX 2013].

[9] B. Hoffman, *Oblicza Terroryzmu*, op. cit., p. 86.

[10] Ibidem, p. 83.

[11] T. Goban-Klas, *Media i terroryści*, op. cit., p. 108.

The attack on the WTC was the beginning of a media marathon of the macabre and of emotional pornography. The mass imagination was dominated by images ranging from multiplied shots of the collapsing Twin Towers, coverage from subsequent interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, to the news reporting on the attacks in Madrid 2004 and in London in 2005. By the same token, in their analyses media experts as well as researchers studying terrorism made diagnoses on the tactical symbiosis of the media and the terrorists in spreading fear. Indeed the media had a serious problem with separating emotions from objectivism, because to a great extent they were seduced by the Manichaean rhetoric of George Bush. Both the terrorist and concerned actions were subordinated to the strategies of aggressive communication on a mass scale. Hence the concern and care in the choice of the targets of attacks was not only in terms of the number of victims and the size of the damage, but also in the photogenic or media aspect of the act itself. The benefits are mutual – terrorists gain publicity, whereas the media gain an attractive topic resulting in high audience ratings and income from commercials[12].

Out of concern for the social morale and keeping up anti-Islamic feelings, daily newspapers interwove suggestive photos of war reporters with satirical pictures, which were mainly about discrediting or even dehumanizing the enemy. William Hart and Fran Hassencahl[13] in their analyses indicate that one year after 11 IX 2001 about 1/5th of such *cartoons* included this very image of a Muslim-Barbarian.

The logic of the society of spectacle as well as a certain degree of the anaesthetizing of recipients make the media need innovations. Hence, certain changes in the rhetoric have been introduced, e.g. after revealing private photographs of the guards humiliating and torturing prisoners from Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo.

Informing people about terrorist acts is not easy and it is not devoid of dilemmas such as "Should one show everything or censor? Should one keep in mind that an individual has the right to access full and reliable information or should one take into account other arguments?" It is very often more important to take into consideration the interests of the investigations which are being conducted, not strengthening social fears, and respect for the victims of attacks as well as their families (cf. the executions of Daniel Pearl (2002) and Piotr Stańczak (2009)). In response to repeated moral appeals for the deliberation of the media, one could notice recently a certain restraint in shocking

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[12] The examples of wrong practices of greedy journalism are numerous, e.g. in 1985 CBS and ABC paid the hijackers (from the Lebanese group Islamic Jihad) of the plane TWA lot 847 a million dollars for the video recordings and the interview. Even more tragic consequences may be caused by the officiousness of journalists who want to broadcast LIVE – to cite the operation "Feuerzauber" in Mogadishu in 1977. A commando of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine hijacked a Lufthansa plane, whereas a German antiterrorist unit GSG 9 rescued the hostages. Before their getting on board the pilot managed to inform the control tower of the number and the distribution of the hijackers. However, due to a leak of this information, the heroic act of the pilot was immediately praised on the radio, which was being listened to by terrorists. His execution was performed immediately (after T. Goban-Klas, *Media i terroryści*, op. cit.).

[13] W. Hart, F. Hassencahl, *Dehumanizing the enemy in editorial cartoons*, in: *Communication and terrorism: Public and media responses to 9/11*, B. S. Greenberg (ed.), NY 2002, after T. Goban-Klas, *Media i terroryści*, op. cit., p. 106.

through the use of sensational images; on the other hand, this means is giving way to tabloids which do not have such ethical dilemmas.

Resonance, once triggered by the mechanisms of scandal, is difficult to suppress, which can be illustrated by a recent scandal around the infamous film *Innocence of Muslims.* This film, though kitsch, poorly filmed and acted, turned out to be an effective provocation. Not only was the Prophet Mehmet shown (against the Islamic iconoclasm), but he was shown as an impostor, womanizer, and a sexual deviant. The world of Islam burst with indignation, and riots broke out, as a result of which Christopher J. Stevens, American ambassador in Libya, was killed. The role of the media consisted in spreading the hasty information that the filmmaker is an American Jew, Sam Bacile, which triggered violent anti-Israeli and anti-American protests. Only a conducted investigation showed that it had been a matter of false identity, and that it was Nakoula Basseley Nakoula, an Egyptian (Coptic Christian)[14], that stood behind the film.

Incidentally, at this point it is worth recalling the worldwide Arabic media which thrived after 11 IX 2001. First Al Jazeera, then Al Arabiya and other channels became not only witnesses of Middle East conflicts but also their catalysts. The messages and fatwas of Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda first reached Allah's believers and only later the western media retransmitted them and censored them ideologically. Although their scope is much smaller, the propaganda radio stations and TV channels set up by Hamas or Hezbollah are not meaningless to local Muslim communities. While the western viewers are able to understand the broadcast messages of an emancipation, liberation or antioccupation nature, they will find it more difficult to accept the nature of video productions which serve the martyrdom of suicidal assassins. Such films are in fact video clips based on the well established pattern: a martyr's confession in front of the video camera including a message to other believers, family, potential followers (the central figure is cropped necessarily against the background of the organization's logotypes, with explosives tied around his / her waist, armed with a Kalashnikov); and subsequently, a detailed video documentation of the mission itself, often followed by a short interview with the proud parent holding a portrait of the son / daughter; the same portrait will be hung on the walls and fences in the neighbourhood and will stay there until it fades or until it is covered by a similar poster with another image. From our perspective, materials of this type have a propaganda dimension but also a training dimension and they also commemorate Shahids and their devotion. Locally, there is another, quite surprising, dimension: namely, entertainment. Khaled Ramadan (a Lebanese artist living in Copenhagen) explains that: "these video tapes have become an art genre, an entertaining cultural terroristic/heroistic product, produced to praise and aestheticize terrorism/heroism"[15].

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[14] See http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2012/09/nakoula-basseley-nakoula-aliases-innocence-mus-lims.html [access: 18 IX 2013]. For more about this film, see: J. Zydorowicz, *Invisible and in-visible. Performative images of terror*, "Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts", 2013, no. XIV, p. 237.

[15] K. Ramadan, *Visual and electronic terror-ism*, http://sparwasserhq.de/Index/HTMLjan3/paper.htm [access: 18 IX 2013]. The author deliberately uses here double categories *terrorism/heroism* combining two perspectives

As entertainment, they give young Muslims the opportunity of "penetrating the real" bringing a far better effect than TV programs such as *reality shows*. Another convention functioning effectively in this circulation is the austere documentation of different attacks, mine explosions, car bombs etc. They are supposed to be short so that they can be sent and endlessly copied between smartphones, blogs and social networking websites.

Even younger spectators are offered cartoons glorifying the conduct of Shahids and other fighters of the Jihad[16], interestingly, very often paraphrasing in a visual sphere such Disney productions as *Mickey Mouse* or *The Lion King* [prod. Al-Aqsa TV].

Farfur Mouse is a brave Jihadist, a proud lion symbolizes Hamas whereas Al-Fatah fighters, i.e. competition fighters, are shown as armed rats basking in American dollars, destroying mosques and universities. Interestingly, eventually the lion routs the rats, but does not murder them but hurts them severely – in the last scenes they run away and on the screen a quote from the Koran appears (17:8)[17] [Then Allah said] "It is expected, [if you repent], that your Lord will have mercy upon you. But if you return [to sin], We will return [to punishment]. And We have made Hell, for the disbelievers, a prison-bed", (http://quran.com/17/8), which in the context of the earlier verses is supposed to send the message: "if you repeat the crime, we shall repeat the punishment". Similar productions of this sort draw on other trendy patterns, i.e. Japanese manga. This style is visible in a cartoon about a little girl called Gaza, whose parents get killed by the Israeli army. In despair she grabs stones and dies too; however, the meaning of this scene is both sublime and optimistic: here is a little girl who can become a martyr, too[18].

Paradoxically, such animations have a two-edged character – for they render a service to counterpropaganda (not only the Israeli one) as a testimony to brainwashing in children, which is a highly inhumane act. On the other hand, several years ago very popular became a photograph of Israeli children with felt-tips writing dedications on the rockets which were being fired at Palestinian districts of The Gaza Strip.

Art

Since the media have received so many remarks and criticism with reference to distorting the relation between terrorism and religion, one should take a careful look at

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of the evaluation of the same phenomena: western people and Islamic fundamentalists. Cf. J. Zydorowicz, *Sztuka w dobie terroru. W poszukiwaniu artystycznego Ground Zero*, in: *Wizje i re-wizje. Wielka księga estetyki w Polsce*, K. Wilkoszewska (ed.), Kraków 2007.

[16] Cf. M. Adamczuk, *Rola dzieci w strategii działania islamskich organizacji terrorystycznych*, an on-line version www.bbn.gov.pl/download/1/9684/ Roladzieciwstrategiidzialaniaislamskich organizacjiterrory stycznych.pdf [access: 18 IX 2013].

[17] Translation: http://www.poznajkoran.pl/koran/17/

[18] The films are available with English subtitles on YouTube.com; http://www.youtube.com/ watch?v= Z2J3my3pOIc; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PF4SuBpPk8E; http://www.youtube.com/ watch?v= waJLs TIohd8 [access: 18 IX 2013].

other areas of visual culture. What is the relation between art and image battles? Definitely the expectations of artists are different, so it would be groundless to formulate accusations of the lack of objectivism, good, beauty or stretching the truth. Although art hardly ever addresses the topic of religious violence, in contemporary artistic practice one can come across an array of attitudes ranging from reserved commentaries to direct involvement in various real conflicts. Thus, in the visual sphere we obtain both subtle, conceptual realizations, almost unprocessed media documentaries from the areas affected by terrorism, as well as provocative images emanating violence which even the media cannot endure.

The first group of examples which I would like to discuss operate on a metalevel of using artistic images to talk about media images, i.e. the problem of terrorism's representation in the news.

It is noteworthy that before 11 IX 2001 this subject was also present in art, although to a lesser degree than nowadays. The media portrait of a terrorist has been analyzed, e.g. by Jürgen Klauke in his work *Antlitze* (1972-2000). He gathered dozens of press cuttings concerning terrorist acts and then created a unique group photograph by selecting and enlarging the portraits of the culprits. The artist reminds us that terrorism, though masked, has got many faces, because apart from Jihadists we may also recognize, among others, the fighters of The Black September Organisation (i.e. the commando unit El-Fatah which was behind the attack on the Israeli Olympic athletes in Munich in 1972), ETA, IRA, RAF and other groups. Thus it is irrelevant if their faces are covered by keffiyeh, a white cloth, or balaclavas – for it is not about anonymity – the portraits get iconized and become a universally clear manifesto of a threat as well as a readiness for sacrifice for the cause.

After 11th September, the media quite significantly changed the ways of talking about terrorism, which was also reflected in artists' reactions. One can confidently talk about a committed attitude with reference to the reactions of a Viennese, Rainer Ganahl. During the invasion of the coalition armies into Iraq and Afghanistan the artist, among other things, decided to learn Arabic and invited immigrants from those countries to join his projects. One of the more interesting productions of this period include sizeable canvases, onto which artists recruited by press announcements transferred screens from information web portals such as Fox News or CNN. In doing so the artist preserved and "froze" the rhetoric of the elusive and ever-changing medium, i.e. the Internet. At the same time he analyzed both the iconography and semantics of these messages, for it turned out that, i.e. the pro-Bushian tycoon, Fox News promoted the epithet "homicide bomber" instead of the phraseologically well established "suicide bomber". In the latter, the figure of the altruistic suicide is hidden[19], and thus hidden too any boundless sacrifice for the cause, which potentially could fill the viewers with admiration rather than condemnation.

The repainting of the media representation of the world is also visible in the works of *TV stories* by Ryszard Waśko. The artist, who in his works had investigated thoroughly

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[19] The category is described by E. Durkheim in the book *Suicide, a study in sociology*, Polish edition: *Samobójstwo: studium z socjologii*, Warszawa 2006; cf. A. Czabański, *Samobójstwa altruistyczne*, Kraków 2009.

the specificity of film and television techniques, decided to grab the paintbrush for a change and since 2001 he has been repainting freeze-frames from the news, ostentatiously enlarging the pixels. This produced canvasses with blurred, though readable from a distance, figures and notices such as: *Jihad – duty for every Muslim: Al-Qaeda.*

Ironically teasing the digital order of the world has also become the tactic of Wilhelm Sasnal. His painting entitled *Gaddafi* (2011), apart from citing from the media, constitutes a commentary on the omnipresent compulsive-ritualistic photographing by means of mobile phones. As we remember, people were queuing for hours to see the corpse of Muammar Gaddafi, which was displayed in the cold store of a local supermarket. This was noticed, among others, by Polish TV reporters, who were standing in the same line, except that they were there "on duty". Incidentally it is worth evoking the recent events which took place in London, when two young Islamic extremists (Michael Adebolajo, Michael Adebowale) shortly after the beheading of Lee Rigby (a British soldier) allowed only women to enter the crime scene and photograph the body by means of mobile phones – despite this, these photographs[20] never hit the headlines and never became media icons.

Thus, there is a certain threshold of sensitivity, which the media try not to cross. This is controversially analyzed by T. Hirschhorn in his production *The Incommensurable Banner* (2007). The artist, coping with the unmeasurable with an almost fetishistic passion, obtained from the Internet hundreds of terrifying photos of bodies, deformed by terrorist actions. Since they were too obscene, they were never shown in the official media. The artist seems to ask about the rules of this exclusion: "We know from our endless 24-hour news channels that every day 10 people die here or there. We want to know but we don't want to see. Because when we see we are more involved. This is the power of visual arts. This is why I am a visual artist and this is why I insist this should be seen"[21]. It is noteworthy that when creating the transparent, Hirschorn used a primitive aesthetics of DIY, known from the media images of the manifestation in the Gaza Strip, Egypt and other places struck by "the Arab spring"[22]. Thus Hirschorn's strategy is a voice in an old discussion about showing the effects of conflicts, e.g. by organizing exhibitions such as the World Press Photo ones. To emphasize this problem, during the Berlin exhibition, *The Uncanny Familiar Images of Terror*, the photos of Anja Niedringhaus, were shown alongside it – an appreciated and numerously awarded war reporter from Associated Press. This act more than clearly captured the unfortunate trap of the anesthetization of violence: photographs from areas of conflict are simply attractive...

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[20] We talk about the events of May 2013 – and despite the condemnation of the act by the British imams, one did not need to wait for too long for revenge action, trials of mosque arson etc.; http://www.tele graph.co. uk/ news/picturegalleries/uknews/10076061/Woolwich-attack-in-pictures-British-soldier-killed-by-terrorists-in -south-London.html?frame=2571599; www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2329089/ Woolwich-attack-Two-men -hack-soldier-wearing-Help-Heroes-T-shirt-death-machetes-suspected-terror-attack.html

[21] After A. Bambury, *Thomas Hirschhorn – The Incommensurable At Brighton's Fabrica*, http://www.culture 24.org.uk/art/photography%20%26%20film/art61501 [access: 12 IX 2012].

[22] The work was shown among other things in the neighborhood of media photographs of "the German autumn" in the exhibition in CO entitled. *The Uncanny Familiar Images of Terror*, 2012.

Here we reach a point when art takes a look at the unshowable, only this time under the decisions of the highest authorities. In his production entitled *May 1* Alfredo Jaar created a commentary on the new strategy of the White House in the field of visual communication after *Operation Geronimo.* The artist referred to the famous photograph by Pete Souza depicting Barack Obama, who together with the team from the White House, observes a live broadcast of the elimination of Osama bin Laden by the American commando unit (1st May 2011). In the name of metonymic rule *pars pro toto* we were allowed to watch only people looking at the death of the terrorist and not about the death itself. In no time it turned out that both nature and culture abhor a vacuum – immediately false photos of the dead Osama bin Laden appeared on the Internet, and on the market – a spontaneous production. For example, triumphant t-shirts (with the notice saying *Obama got Osama*) appeared as gadgets commemorating the incident.

The second group of examples worth discussing with reference to the subject matter signalled in the title, represent a kind of contemporary historical art. In these cases artists refer to the events and conflicts more directly, i.e. they don't only comment on their medial representations. For example, in the case of the scandal of the tortures in Abu Ghraib, artists such as Fernando Botero, Guy Colwell or Josh Azzarella decided to bring this controversial topic to the contexts of the art gallery. This broadened significantly the scope of the discussion: so far the media had discussed the issues of the lawfulness of torturing prisoners suspected of terrorism, and politicians were outraged that the issue leaked, providing Al-Qaeda and similar formations with a propaganda arsenal, whilst others were indignant at the fact that the rhetoric based on the aforementioned dichotomy good – bad, the civilized – barbarians, was disturbed. Additionally, there was a helpless reflection on the fact that these were spontaneous, commemorative photos of military guards, often taken for fun.

Many artistic undertakings are not limited to the traditional circulation of art, tactically coming close to direct actions from the *urban guerrilla*. Such is the action *Stamp for Palestine*[23]. Khaled Jarrar[24] designed and made the "national" stamp of Palestine, which, among other things, in Ramallah was stamped into passports of willing passers-by (mainly tourists, which made them face the unpredictable reactions of the Israeli border services. A similar example was a collective undertaking of refugees from Bethlehem entitled *Key of Return* (2008-2012)[25]. It is a gigantic key travelling all over the world, which

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[23] The film showing the artist's reaction in Ramallah http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snkXi2wn3hA [access: 24 XI 2013].

[24] Khaled Jarrar – Born in Jenin in 1976, lives and works in Ramallah, Palestine. He completed his education in Interior Design at the Palestine Polytechnic University in 1996, then graduated from the International Academy of Art Palestine with a BA in Visual Arts in 2011.

[25] See http://www.berlinbiennale.de/blog/en/projects/key-of-return-probably-the-biggest-key-in-the-world-19705 [access: 24 XI 2013]. 7 BERLIN BIENNALE, *The Key of Return*, 2008-2012 The key sculpture is a collective work by the refugees of the Bethlehem area and the Aida Youth Centre. This project is co-curated by the residents of the Aida Refugee Camp; Khaled Hourani, Director of International Art Academy Palestine; and Toleen Touq, independent curator, Palestine / Jordan.

symbolizes historical moments when e.g. in 1948 or 1967 Palestinians displaced from their houses took their keys, believing in their early return. Until today, although most of these households don't exist anymore, these keys have a significant meaning in the symbolism of cultural resistance and are handed down from generation to generation as a real tangible sign of "the right to return".

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict engages both local and western artists. This is especially clear to see in the field of street art, e.g. the numerous graffiti made on a wall in Bethlehem by the legendary British artist, Banksy. Even more spectacular was the project *Face2Face* (2006) done by a French photographer hiding under a pseudonym JR[26]. This time it was humour that was supposed to serve as a rhetorical weapon and as a catalyst of dialogue. By means of a wide-angle lens, the artist took amusing photos of common people on both sides of the wall: both young and old, imams and Rabbis, bakers and students. These photographs were enlarged significantly and hung as posters both in Israeli and Palestinian districts. They sparked off various reactions – some people found them amusing – others found them irritating; still others were provoked to remove them, and when the artist was arrested for the illegal hanging of the posters by an Israeli patrol, an old but lively old Jew defended him. The educational dimension of this was that both Palestinians and the Israelis did not always manage to recognize "their folks".

The third group of examples comprises artistic initiatives taking up the problem of preserving stereotypes of Muslims. Also among these works we find an array of attitudes ranging from the mildly critical to really involved ones. In a series of photographs *Model for Suspects* (2004) Michael Schäffer presents men in windows. In a confrontation with these photos the western viewer gets "caught", feeling anxious because of the automaticity of the ensuing stream of association: a suspicious bearded guy is watching from behind the net curtain, he is probably an immigrant from the Middle East, a Muslin, most probably a fundamentalist *ergo*: a terrorist. Immediately questions arise: are such fears and their projections onto Islamic believers just a media product? To what extent are these visual canons giving us a reason to feel fear and prejudice superimposed, and to what extent do we replicate them and strengthen them? In search of the answer to the question of the source of such prejudices Jacqueline Salloum, who was a Palestinian living and working in New York, edited a ten minute film entitled *Planet of the Arabs* (2003). Both the title and the logotype tendentiously make references to the classic *science-fiction* film *Planet of the Apes;* however, in her project the artist used only fragments of ready made Hollywood films and cartoons which contained scenes with Arabs. It is not hard to guess – these were mainly scenes in which Muslims were presented as bloodthirsty fanatics or thoughtless fools. This work was inspired by Jack Shaheen's book *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*[27], in which a thousand films with Arabic characters

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[26] Photographic documentation and video of the project available at: http://www.jr-art.net/projects/face-2-face [access: 24 XI 2013].

[27] J. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, 2009. A documentary based on the book was made – see http://www.reelbadarabs.com/ [access: 24 XI 2013].

(or Muslims) were analyzed. Only 12 of them contained a positive image, 52 films were relatively neutral, and the remaining 936 films were completely negative. It is worth mentioning that the analyzed productions were made in the years 1996-2000, i.e. before the WTC and Pentagon were attacked.

After 11.09.2001 there was an obvious increase in Islamophobic public feeling, and even in such countries as Holland the regulations concerning immigrants were toughened up. In 2004 the world could see the photo taken by Paul Vreeker, in which an Iranian, Mehdy Kavousi, sewed his lips and eyes as a sign of protest against the plans of deporting Muslim immigrants[28].

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Austin Cline analyses religious terrorism in terms of communicative strategies as a symbolic act. In his opinion the scenarios of religious extremists with the use of bombs are not a tactic aiming at a direct and immediate effect or a strategic aim but are designed as dramatic, symbolically imbued events. This theatricalization makes us feel like we're watching the performance of violence, religious ritual, or street theatre. Even if we observe indirectly though the media, we are part of it. By the same token, terrorist acts become performatives and as such they change reality[29].

Visual culture in its media impersonation plays an active role in changing reality, so what role does art play then? Do artists secretively envy terrorists and journalists? Or do they only multiply, clone, cite *ad nauseam* images of terror from television, newspapers and the Internet? This does not have to be necessarily perceived this way. The media have a streaming nature, one piece of information is displaced by another more and more quickly. In this way the viewer sees only flickering images of events, which do not manage to become meaningful. The specificity of art (independently of the applied tactics and the degree of involvement) is to be thought-provoking and to provoke discussions and debates.

The clearest difference between artists and terrorists is that the former do not have enemies to fight with. And if they start to see such enemies, then their work stops being art and starts being propaganda.

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[28] A photograph presented during the World Press Photo 2004 was the first runner-up in the category "People".

[29] A. Cline, *Religious Terrorism as Symbol, Ritual & Performance Violence. Is Religious Violence a Type of Religious Ritual in a Cosmic Drama?*, http://atheism.about.com/od/religiousviolencecauses/a/RitualViolence.htm [access: 12 IX 2012]. Austin Cline is a publicist (holding a degree in art from the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University) who works in the area of the social aspects of atheism and religiousness etc.